



State of California

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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**The California Youth Authority has not corrected deficiencies identified by past audits in its
“core mission” of providing rehabilitation services to wards**

The Office of the Inspector General — the watchdog for California’s correctional system — today released the largest audit in its history and took the California Youth Authority to task for failing to implement a significant percentage of recommendations resulting from past audits. In releasing a 200-page “Accountability Audit,” Inspector General Matthew L. Cate reported that the California Youth Authority has fully or substantially implemented only 57 percent of 241 recommendations issued by the Office of the Inspector General as the result of nine audits performed since December 2000.

Noting that the present administration inherited almost all of the problems identified in the audit, Cate said, nonetheless, “The Youth Authority must take immediate steps to address these failings, which go to the heart of its rehabilitation mission.”

“Most troubling,” said Cate, “is that many of the deficiencies that have not been corrected are central to the Youth Authority’s core mission of rehabilitating the young people entrusted to its care.” The Inspector General noted for example, that “too many wards are still confined to cells 23 hours per day with little access to the education and counseling services that are so critical to rehabilitation efforts.” According to the audit report released Monday, an estimated 103 wards at the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility in Chino are locked up 23 hours a day “for the sole reason that the institution lacks enough teachers to provide mandated education classes.”

At several institutions, Cate reported, the Youth Authority is failing to provide wards with the required minimum of four hours of education per day. At the Southern Youth Correctional Reception

Center and Clinic, for example, the wards received an average of only 96 minutes of instruction time per day. At the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility, an average of 18 classes a day — 30 percent of those scheduled — are cancelled primarily because the teacher is absent and the facility has only one substitute teacher available to fill in.

Mental health and counseling services for wards are similarly lacking, the Inspector General reported. The Inspector General's staff found that not a single ward in a sample from the general population at the Heman G. Stark facility had received the minimum amount of required counseling. And even though department policy calls for all wards entering the Youth Authority to receive a treatment needs assessment within 21 days of arrival to determine their mental health needs, many do not receive the assessment in that time frame. The Inspector General's staff found that 114 wards committed to the Youth Authority between January and November 2004 did not receive treatment needs assessments on time and that 627 parole violators returned to custody during the same period did not receive treatment needs assessments at all.

"The failure of the Youth Authority to provide these mental health assessments is profound," Cate said. "If wards are not properly assessed, they cannot be effectively treated."

Cate continued, "it is imperative to remember that almost every ward of the Youth Authority will eventually be released back into society. The most recent data shows a recidivism rate for these young people of more than 70 percent — a number that everyone agrees is unacceptable and an indicator of the need for fundamental change."

The report released Monday represents the first of three Accountability Audits to be released by the Office of the Inspector General in coming months. The remaining two Accountability Audits will cover the Board of Prison Terms and the Department of Corrections. Altogether, the three reports will assess the progress of the state's correctional agencies in implementing recommendations from 32 of the Inspector General's past audits.

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The full text of the Inspector General's Accountability Audit on the California Youth Authority can be viewed and downloaded from the Office of the Inspector General's web site at <http://www.oig.ca.gov/>. To view the audit on the web site, click on the report title, "Accountability Audit: Review of Audits of the California Youth Authority, 2000-2003," on the home page or on the link titled "Reports."

The Office of the Inspector General is an independent state agency responsible for oversight of the California correctional system, including the California Youth Authority and the Department of Corrections. The office carries out its mission by auditing and investigating correctional organizations under the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency to uncover criminal conduct, administrative wrongdoing, poor management practices, waste, fraud, and other abuses by staff, supervisors, and management. The Accountability Audit of the California Youth Authority was conducted under the authority provided to the Inspector General by Penal Code section 6126.

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